



Stability in Russia's Chechnya and Other Regions of the North Caucasus: Recent Developments

Jim Nichol

Specialist in Russian and Eurasian Affairs

April 3, 2009

Congressional Research Service

7-5700

www.crs.gov

RL34613

CRS Report for Congress

Prepared for Members and Committees of Congress

| Report Documentation Page | | | <i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i> | |
|---|------------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------------|
| <p>Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.</p> | | | | |
| 1. REPORT DATE 03 APR 2009 | 2. REPORT TYPE | 3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2009 to 00-00-2009 | | |
| 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Stability in Russia's Chechnya and Other Regions of the North Caucasus: Recent Developments | | 5a. CONTRACT NUMBER | | |
| | | 5b. GRANT NUMBER | | |
| | | 5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER | | |
| 6. AUTHOR(S) | | 5d. PROJECT NUMBER | | |
| | | 5e. TASK NUMBER | | |
| | | 5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER | | |
| 7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, 101 Independence Ave SE, Washington, DC, 20540-7500 | | 8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER | | |
| 9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) | | 10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) | | |
| | | 11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) | | |
| 12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited | | | | |
| 13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES | | | | |
| 14. ABSTRACT | | | | |
| 15. SUBJECT TERMS | | | | |
| 16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF: | | | 17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR) | 18. NUMBER OF PAGES 19 |
| a. REPORT unclassified | b. ABSTRACT unclassified | c. THIS PAGE unclassified | 19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON | |

Summary

In recent years, major terrorist attacks have abated in Russia's North Caucasus—a border area between the Black and Caspian Seas that includes the formerly breakaway Chechnya and other ethnic-based regions—although small-scale attacks reportedly continue. Previous major terrorist attacks included the June 2004 raid on security offices in the town of Nazran (in Ingushetia), where nearly 100 security personnel and civilians were killed, and the September 2004 attack at the Beslan grade school (in North Ossetia), where 300 or more civilians were killed. The dearth of such attacks might in part be attributed to government tactics, including over a thousand sweep operations (“zachistki”) carried out in the North Caucasus. During these operations, security forces surround a village and search all the citizens, ostensibly in a bid to apprehend terrorists. Critics of the operations allege that the security forces frequently engage in pillaging and gratuitous violence and are responsible for kidnapping for ransom and “Disappearances” of civilians. Through these sweeps, as well as through direct clashes, most of the masterminds of major terrorist attacks have been killed.

Besides the apparently frequent small-scale attacks against government targets in several regions of the North Caucasus, many ethnic Russian and other non-native civilians have been murdered or have disappeared, which has spurred the migration of most of the non-native population from the North Caucasus. Russian authorities argue that foreign terrorist groups continue to operate in the North Caucasus and to receive outside financial and material assistance. Some observers warn that rising popular discontent might contribute to the re-emergence of major terrorism in the North Caucasus.

The United States generally has supported the Russian government's efforts to combat terrorism in the North Caucasus. However, successive Administrations and Congress have continued to raise concerns about the wide scope of human rights abuses committed by the Russian government in the North Caucasus. Omnibus Appropriations for FY2009 (P.L. 111-8), signed into law on March 11, 2009, calls for \$9.0 million to continue humanitarian, conflict mitigation, human rights, civil society and relief and recovery assistance programs in the North Caucasus. It also repeats language used for several years that directs that 60% of the assistance allocated to Russia will be withheld (excluding medical, human trafficking, and Comprehensive Threat Reduction aid) until the President certifies that Russia is facilitating full access to Chechnya for international non-governmental organizations providing humanitarian relief to displaced persons.

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Impact of the August 2008 Russia-Georgia Conflict..... | 3 |
| Recent Developments in the North Caucasus..... | 4 |
| Chechnya..... | 4 |
| Ingushetia | 5 |
| Dagestan..... | 7 |
| Other Areas of the North Caucasus | 8 |
| Contributions to Instability..... | 9 |
| Implications for Russia..... | 11 |
| International Response | 12 |
| Implications for U.S. Interests..... | 13 |

Tables

| | |
|---|----|
| Table 1. U.S. Assistance to Russia's North Caucasus Region, FY2007 and FY2008 | 15 |
|---|----|

Contacts

| | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| Author Contact Information | 16 |
|----------------------------------|----|

Introduction

In recent years, there have not been major terrorist attacks in the North Caucasus¹ on the scale of the June 2004 raid on security offices in the town of Nazran (in Ingushetia), where nearly 100 security personnel and civilians were killed, or the September 2004 attack at the Beslan grade school (in North Ossetia), where 300 or more civilians were killed. This record, in part, could be attributed to government tactics. This record, in part, might be attributed to government tactics, including over a thousand sweep operations (“zachistki”) carried out in the North Caucasus. During these operations, security forces surround a village and search all the citizens, ostensibly in a bid to apprehend terrorists. Critics of the operations allege that the troops frequently engage in pillaging and gratuitous violence and are responsible for kidnapping for ransom and “disappearances” of civilians. Through these sweeps, as well as through direct clashes, most of the masterminds of major terrorist attacks have been killed.

For the past two years, however, there reportedly have been frequent smaller-scale attacks in several regions against government targets. According to the State Department, “complex and interlocking insurgencies caused continuing instability in the North Caucasus. These included the remnants of a nationalist separatist insurgency in Chechnya, a widening Islamist insurgency throughout the North Caucasus, violence committed by both government and nongovernment actors in Ingushetia, and continued clan warfare among elite groups struggling for power.... Unrest continued in and around the Chechen Republic and worsened considerably in ... Ingushetia.”² Such unrest also reportedly has increased in Dagestan. Additionally, many ethnic Russian and other non-native civilians have been murdered or have disappeared, which has spurred the migration of most of the non-native population from the North Caucasus.

Some observers warn that rising popular discontent might contribute to growing numbers of recruits for terrorist groups and even the re-emergence of major terrorism in the North Caucasus. According to analyst Gordon Hahn, “the abandonment of attacks on civilians suggests the Caucasus jihadists have learned that excessive violence can be counterproductive to their cause. Instead of the earlier indiscriminate, then intentional operations on civilians, they now emphasize, formally, that they are not about killing civilians [and] are purposefully organizing teaching to civilians the proper Islamic life.” Hahn warns that such efforts recently may be winning support from the population, as well as volunteers for *jihad*, after a period when such support and volunteers had been in decline.³

While most observers consider that the incidence of violence in the North Caucasus is at a troubling level, the question of whether it has been increasing in recent years is controversial. Some Russian officials have stated that violence has been increasing. In February 2009, President Medvedev stated that “the situation in the North Caucasus remains strained. Extremists are stepping up their subversive terrorist activities and at the same time are trying to conduct a campaign to discredit the government bodies of the North Caucasus republics.”⁴ Anatoly Safonov,

¹ Russia's North Caucasus as used here includes the “republics” of Adygea, Karachay-Cherkessia, Kabarda-Balkaria, North Ossetia-Alania, Ingushetia, Chechnya, and Dagestan, and the Krasnodar and Stavropol “territories.”

² U.S. Department of State. Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008, February 25, 2009.

³ Gordon Hahn, “The Caucasus Emirate and Its New Tactics,” *Mideast Monitor*, December 2008.

⁴ Open Source Center. *Central Eurasia: Daily Report* (hereafter CEDR), February 6, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950260.

the presidential representative for international cooperation on combating terrorism and organized crime, warned in February 2009 that al Qaeda and its affiliates were increasing their influence in the North Caucasus.⁵ The Interior Ministry reported that the rising violence in the North Caucasus in 2008, particularly in Ingushetia, contributed to a decision that it would not reduce its force levels in the North Caucasus and would increase the supply of equipment for its forces.⁶ In summing up its work in 2008 across Russia, the National Anti-Terrorist Committee (NAC; an inter-agency directive body, headed by the Federal Security Service, with branches in the regions) hailed the elimination of several notable terrorist groups and the prevention of terrorism, but also warned that in the North Caucasus, “bandits” and Islamic extremists continued to constitute the main terrorist threats to Russia.⁷ The Center for Strategic and International Studies, a U.S. think tank, has estimated that violence started to increase in the North Caucasus in early 2007 and was at an even higher level in early 2009.⁸

Other Russian officials have stated that violence has been decreasing, while still cautioning that the area remains unstable. Russia's First Deputy Prosecutor General, Alexander Bastrykin, claimed that the rate of terrorist and extremist crimes in the North Caucasus had declined sharply during the first two months of 2009 as compared to the same period in 2008, although he acknowledged that such crimes were increasing in Russia as a whole.⁹

Seemingly at variance with his February 2009 statement (see above), on March 27, 2009, President Medvedev ordered the NAC to examine whether the counter-terrorist operations regime in Chechnya (declared nearly 10 years ago and later extended to other areas of the North Caucasus) might be lifted. He argued that “given that the situation [in Chechnya] has to a substantial degree normalized, life there is becoming normal, modern facilities are being built, social issues are being addressed, I think that it is necessary to consider the issue of the legal regime.” Perhaps indicating that the formal lifting of the regime may not substantially alter the human rights situation, he specified that security agencies could still impose “if need be individual provisions of the counter-terrorist operation regime, and tak[e] the necessary action in Chechnya and the other republics in southern Russia, where there is still a threat of terrorist attacks.”¹⁰ Reasons for Medvedev's reassessment might have included budgetary pressures associated with keeping sizable forces in Chechnya and Prime Minister Putin's support for force reductions, according to some observers. Kadyrov had been calling for lifting the counter-terrorist operations regime, claiming that it would facilitate the building of international trade ties and otherwise boost economic development in the region. As part of his argument, Kadyrov disputed estimates given by the operations headquarters attached to Chechnya's anti-terrorism committee that there were about 480 insurgents in the region in early 2009, stating that “I say there are no more than 70. And they will be finished off within a month.”¹¹ According to media reports, there remain about 50,000 troops and police deployed in Chechnya.

⁵ *RIA Novosti*, February 17, 2009.

⁶ *Interfax*, January 21, 2009; *CEDR*, January 27, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950376.

⁷ *CEDR*, March 26, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-21002.

⁸ Center for Strategic and International Studies, *Violence In The North Caucasus: Trends Since 2004, 2008; Violence in the North Caucasus: Fall/Winter 2008, 2009*.

⁹ *ITAR-TASS*, March 18, 2009.

¹⁰ President of Russia. *Beginning of Working Meeting with Director of the Federal Security Service Alexander Bortnikov*, March 27, 2009, at http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2009/03/27/2210_type82913_214418.shtml.

¹¹ *CEDR*, March 26, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-21002.

At a meeting of the NAC held on March 31, 2009, chairman and director of the Federal Security Service Aleksandr Borotnikov stated that the NAC would postpone a decision until it had worked out how to “secure reliable control over the situation in the region and the necessary level of citizens’ safety.... [The] operations headquarters ... will step up ... actions aimed at exposing and intercepting the activities of the remaining gangs [and] foreign mercenaries.”¹² According to one media source, one factor hampering an immediate decision was NAK concerns that terrorism could be on the upswing in the North Caucasus. Another factor, according to the source, was the reluctance of military forces in Chechnya to give up their combat pay and privileges if redeployed.¹³

Impact of the August 2008 Russia-Georgia Conflict

Several Russian policymakers and others have suggested that the August 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict contributed to increased instability in the North Caucasus. In February 2009, President Medvedev stated (as mentioned above) that terrorism had increased. Similarly, Russian analyst Viktor Nadein-Raeovsky has claimed that “external forces and the so-called Wahhabi underground ... aiming to weaken Russia and to sever the Caucasus from it laid great hopes on Georgia’s attack.” These groups “had planned a large-scale offensive in the Russian Caucasus in the wake of Georgia’s aggression. When it proved to be a failure these forces changed tactics,” and launched terrorist attacks instead.¹⁴ According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, there was a “lull in violence” in the North Caucasus during the Russia-Georgia conflict, but “following the conflict, the level of violence in the North Caucasus rose sharply, particularly in Ingushetia.”¹⁵

Several observers have accused Russia of hypocrisy in recognizing the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia while suppressing separatism in Chechnya. These observers warn that separatists in the North Caucasus could be encouraged by the example of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.¹⁶ Attempting to refute such a linkage, Prime Minister Putin claimed in September 2008 that before the conflict, some groups in the North Caucasus had advocated separatism because they felt that Russia was not defending the rights of South Ossetians. He asserted that by defending South Ossetia, Russia averted destabilization of the North Caucasus.¹⁷ Offering what may be a more conventional rationale, Russian analyst Aleksey Malashenko has argued that Russia’s use of overwhelming force against Georgia serves as a potent example to the North Caucasus (as was the recent case of Chechnya) that Russia will continue to use force to safeguard its interests in the Caucasus. He suggests that this example will constrain separatism, as will the fear of civil conflict and the fear of breaking what are regarded as essential economic ties with

¹² *ITAR-TASS*, March 31, 2009.

¹³ *CEDR*, April 2, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-358020. See also April 3, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-379001.

¹⁴ “Wave of Terror Looming Over the Caucasus?” *Russia Today*, November 7, 2008.

¹⁵ Violence in the North Caucasus.

¹⁶ *The Economist*, August 28, 2008-September 3, 2008.

¹⁷ *Interfax*, September 11, 2008; “Chairman of the Government of Russia Vladimir Putin Meets with Members of the International Discussion Club Valdai,” at www.government.ru/content/governmentactivity/mainnews/archive/2008/09/11/8225672.htm.

Moscow. He warns, however, that Russia's ongoing civil rights abuses in the North Caucasus are spurring the growth of Islamic terrorism.¹⁸

Some residents of the North Caucasus have criticized Russia's economic assistance to Abkhazia and South Ossetia—which ostensibly are foreign countries after being recognized by Moscow in the wake of the Russia-Georgia conflict—while the North Caucasus remains mired in poverty. Russian analyst Alexey Malashenko warns that the global economic downturn and Russia's boosted financial commitments to Abkhazia and South Ossetia could result in fewer Russian subsidies to the North Caucasus, perhaps triggering more discontent.¹⁹

Recent Developments in the North Caucasus

Chechnya

Some observers have argued that Russia's efforts to suppress the separatist movement in its Chechnya region have been the most violent in Europe in recent years in terms of ongoing military and civilian casualties.²⁰ In late 1999, Russia's then-Premier Putin ordered military, police, and security forces to enter the breakaway Chechnya region. By early 2000, these forces occupied most of the region. High levels of fighting continued for several more years, and resulted in thousands of Russian and Chechen casualties and hundreds of thousands of displaced persons. In 2005, then-Chechen rebel leader Abdul-Khalim Saydullayev decreed the formation of a Caucasus Front against Russia among Islamic believers in the North Caucasus, in an attempt to widen Chechnya's conflict with Russia.

The high levels of conflict in Chechnya appeared to ebb markedly after mid-decade with the killing, capture, or surrender of leading Chechen insurgents. However, Russian security forces and pro-Moscow Chechen forces still contend with residual insurgency. Remaining rebels have split into two basic groups, one led by Doka Umarov, who emphasizes jihad, and the other a more disparate group represented by Akhmed Zakayev, who stresses independence for Chechnya more than jihad. Reportedly, Zakayev has little or no influence over paramilitary operations. Umarov allegedly attempted to replace Zakayev as Chechnya's European emissary with the father of the terrorist who led hostage-taking at a Moscow theater in 2002. In late 2007, Umarov proclaimed the goal of an "Emirate of the Caucasus." He has claimed that he never targets civilians and denounced the Beslan hostage-taking.²¹

Russia's pacification policy has involved setting up a pro-Moscow regional government and transferring more and more local security duties to this government. An important factor in Russia's seeming success in Chechnya has been reliance on pro-Moscow Chechen clans affiliated with regional president Ramzan Kadyrov. Police and paramilitary forces under his authority

¹⁸ CEDR, October 8, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-8015.

¹⁹ Alexey Malashenko, "The North Caucasus Today: The View on the Ground and from Moscow," Event Summary, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 21, 2008.

²⁰ For background information, see CRS Report RL32272, *Bringing Peace to Chechnya? Assessments and Implications*, by Jim Nichol.

²¹ Andrei Babitsky, "Russia: RFE/RL Interviews Chechen Field Commander Umarov," *RFE/RL*, July 28, 2005.

allegedly have committed flagrant abuses of human rights, including by holding the relatives of insurgents as hostages under threat of death until the insurgents surrendered.

Russia's efforts to rebuild the largely devastated region have been impressive but reportedly are undermined by rampant corruption. Some types of crimes against civilians reportedly have decreased, such as kidnapping and disappearances, according to the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, a non-governmental organization (NGO). Many displaced Chechens still fear returning to the region, and a sizeable number have emigrated from Russia.

In late June 2008, Colonel-General Gennadiy Troshev, adviser to the Russian president and former commander of the Joint Group of Forces in the North Caucasus, stated that "all large organized armed groups in Chechnya have been eliminated, defeated or dispersed. The remaining small disconnected armed groups [have moved to] Dagestan and Ingushetia." Nonetheless, he warned that "it is too soon to say that the situation in [Chechnya] as well as in the entire North Caucasus has completely normalized."²² In a summing up of results in 2008, Lt. Gen. Mikhail Shepilov, Director of the Operational Group of the Interior Ministry, praised police for preventing any large-scale terrorism in Chechnya, and Kadyrov and other Chechen officials claimed that terrorism and other violence had declined during the year.²³

French analyst Laurent Vinatier argued in late 2008 that the large economic subsidies to the region provided by the central government "makes the separatist groups in the mountains less attractive for the young generation.... The possibilities offered by the Chechen government in education, administration and business-related areas (such as reconstruction) offer real opportunities to rising cohorts. Given the extensive unemployment, there are still numerous potentially discontent young people, but the number of volunteers for jihad is not as high as it was in previous years." He does allow, however, that the abuses of the Kadyrov government may spur some youth to join Islamic extremist groups.²⁴

In contrast to these views, Major General Nikolay Sivak warned in May 2008 that a new generation of Chechen youth were becoming rebels and were receiving help from the population, so that Russia's national security continued to be threatened.²⁵ Analyst Gordon Hahn similarly suggested in late 2008 that after popular support for the Chechen insurgents declined following large-scale terrorist attacks such as at Beslan, it may have increased recently, contributing to a spurt in the numbers of youth joining the mujahedin.²⁶

Ingushetia

According to some observers, Ingushetia in recent years has threatened to become the "new Chechnya" of disorder and violence in the region, a "mini-failed state."²⁷ The Chechen-Ingush

²² CEDR, June 25, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950138.

²³ CEDR, January 26, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-546001.

²⁴ Laurent Vinatier, "War and Peace in Chechnya: The Role of Ramzan Kadyrov," *Russian Analytical Digest*, December 4, 2008.

²⁵ CEDR, May 20, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-548001.

²⁶ Gordon J. Hahn, "The Caucasus Emirate and Its New Tactics," *Mideast Monitor*, December 2008.

²⁷ "Commentators See Ingushetia as a 'Failed State' Where an Uprising Could Occur," *Chechnya Weekly*, Vol. 8, Issue 34 (September 6, 2007); "Ingushetia Takes Chechnya's Place as the North Caucasus Hot Spot," *Chechnya Weekly*, September 6, 2007.

Autonomous Republic, divided in the late Soviet period into separate Chechen and Ingush Republics, has proven unable to demarcate a common border. This has contributed to tensions between Chechens and Ingushes. Stalin's deportation of the Ingush during World War II and their return in the 1950s to find that some of their lands had been ceded to the North Ossetian Autonomous Republic, has contributed to Ingush-Ossetian clashes. More recently, in October 1992 hundreds of Ingush reportedly were killed and over 60,000 forced from their homes in the Prigorodny District of North Ossetia.

According to testimony by Russian human rights advocate Gregory Shvedov, there are up to 200 terrorists based in Ingushetia.²⁸ Small-scale rebel attacks intensified in 2007 and 2008, prompting Russia to deploy more and more security, military, and police forces to the republic. Since 2007, there allegedly have been more killings, attacks, and abductions in Ingushetia—perpetrated by government and rebel forces, criminals, and others—than in any other republic in the North Caucasus.²⁹ Ingushetia prosecutor Usman Belkharoyev has reported that more than 70 security personnel were killed in armed attacks in Ingushetia in 2008, compared to 32 in 2007. He also reported that 167 police and troops were injured in such attacks in 2008, compared to 80 in 2007.³⁰

What Russian analyst Sergey Markedonov termed a “loyal opposition” movement in Ingushetia—that supports Russian rule in the republic—increasingly opposed the leadership of Murat Zyazikov, who became governor in 2002 after an election that many observers viewed as manipulated by Moscow. Another group, the Islamic extremists, wants to evict “kafirs” (infidels) and “murtads” (apostate Muslims) and create a North Caucasus emirate.³¹ This “loyal opposition” organized several rallies in 2007 and 2008 to protest local government corruption, extrajudicial killings, and other alleged abuses by security forces. On August 31, 2008, opposition figure Magomed Yevloyev was shot by police and dumped along the road. The Ingush opposition appealed to U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, condemning the killing as a sign of the “genocide” against the Ingush that was prompting more and more Ingush to seek independence from Russia.³²

After Russia recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, an opposition People's Assembly of Ingushetia—composed of emissaries from nearly two dozen clans—called for Ingushetia's secession from Russia if Zyazikov was not removed from office. Opposition activist Magomed Khazbiyev likewise stated that “We must ask Europe or America to separate us from Russia.”³³ On 18 October, 2008, a Russian military convoy came under grenade attack and machine gun fire near Nazran. Russia officially reported that two soldiers had been killed, but

²⁸ Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. *Briefing: Ingushetia, the New Hot Spot in Russia's North Caucasus*, June 19, 2008.

²⁹ Andrei Smirnov, “Kremlin Adopts New Counter-Insurgency Methods in Ingushetia,” *Chechnya Weekly*, September 27, 2007. U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices in 2007*, March 11, 2008. According to testimony by Magomed Mutsolgov, the Director of the Ingush Mashr Human Rights Organization, kidnappings in Ingushetia have decreased over the past year or so from previously high levels, but murders by the police have increased. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. *Briefing: Ingushetia, the New Hot Spot in Russia's North Caucasus*, June 19, 2008.

³⁰ CEDR, December 20, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950098.

³¹ CEDR, June 17, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-379001. See also CEDR, November 26, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-25007.

³² Open Source Center. *Open Source Feature*, September 18, 2008, Doc. No. FEA-775593.

³³ Adrian Blomfield, “Russia Faces New Caucasus Uprising In Ingushetia,” *The Telegraph* (London), September 1, 2008.

other reports were that as many as 40-50 Russian soldiers were killed. On October 30, 2008 President Zyazikov was removed from office and Col. Yunus-Bek Yevkurov was nominated by Dmitry Medvedev and quickly approved by the Ingush legislature. He declared that he would suppress the local insurgency while reducing abuses against civilians by federal forces. Although Zyazikov was replaced, however, attacks on security forces continued. On March 12, Yevkurov reported that insurgents had killed 18 security personnel since the beginning of the year, and stated that “the biggest problem we are facing is the problem of criminals who carry out terrorist actions.”³⁴ Among recent actions, a counterterrorism operations legal regime was declared in a village in late March 2009, where security personnel fought with four alleged terrorists.

Some observers have warned that since Russia has strengthened ethnic Ossetian influence by recognizing the “independence” of South Ossetia, this ethnic group will be even less amenable to Russia’s efforts to bring conciliation between Ossetians and Ingush, including by encouraging North Ossetia to permit some Ingush to resettle in Prigorodny.

Dagestan

The majority of the citizenry in Dagestan, a multi-ethnic republic, reportedly support membership in the Russian Federation rather than separatism. In August 1999, however, some Islamic fundamentalists—with the support of Chechen rebels—declared the creation of an Islamic republic in western Dagestan. Russian and Dagestani security forces quickly defeated this insurgency. There has been some growth in Islamic extremism in recent years, and terrorist attacks have occurred in northern and central areas bordering Chechnya. In late 2007, thousands of security personnel were deployed for a “zachistka” against the village of Gimry in central Dagestan, which continued for several months and resulted in the arrest of dozens of villagers on charges of terrorism. During 2008, attacks on government offices have spread to southern Dagestan. Some of these attacks allegedly were triggered by a local government crackdown on practicing Muslims.³⁵ The International Crisis Group NGO has claimed that the extremist Islamist group Sharia Jamaat is responsible for a large share of the rising violence that has resulted in the killing of hundreds of local officials in Dagestan. The recruitment efforts of Sharia Jamaat benefit from the allegedly arbitrary and corrupt actions of local police and security forces. In 2007, Sharia Jamaat endorsed Chechen rebel leader Umarov’s goal of establishing a North Caucasian Emirate.³⁶

In late 2008, Dagestani President Mukhu Aliyev reported that “bandits” had killed 83 police and 19 civilians during the past two years, fewer than in previous years. He also reported that 124 “bandits” had been killed and 192 “rebels and accomplices” detained. In mid-March 2009, Dagestani Interior Minister Lieutenant-General Adilgerez Magomedtagirov estimated that there remained only about 50-70 militants in Dagestan, because of intensified counter-terrorist efforts during 2008. He pointed out that “we recently killed Omar Sheykhullayev [on February 5, 2009], the emir of Dagestan who was appointed by Doku Umarov. Before him there was [Ilgar Mollachiiev, who was killed on September 7, 2008], also an emir and the closest associate of

³⁴ North Caucasus Weekly, March 13, 2009.

³⁵ “North Caucasus: Instability In Dagestan Spreads To South,” *RFE/RL Russia Report*, February 15, 2008.

³⁶ *Russia's Dagestan: Conflict Causes*, International Crisis Group, June 3, 2008.

Doku Umarov and Khattab. He was killed along with ten other people. I think all we need right now is a bit more time, and we will deal with these groups as well.”³⁷

Appearing to belie Magomedtagirov’s assessment of the situation, counterterrorism operations legal regimes were declared at least four times in February 2009. In March 2009, one was declared in mountain areas of Dagestan, where several insurgent groups—allegedly including some foreign mujahedin—engaged in fierce fighting with security forces. In late March 2009, Dagestani political analyst Khadzhimurat Kamalov discounted any effect on Dagestan’s security if some or all aspects of the counterterrorism operations legal regime in Chechnya are lifted. He stated that the declaration of counterterrorism operations in areas of Dagestan now “happens so frequently that it seems to be just a matter of time before it is introduced across Dagestan. Chechnya is not a considerable factor of tension here. Dagestan has its own problems and sources of extremism [which are] exacerbated by the lack of professionalism of many members of power-wielding bodies [and] by high-profile and non-targeted special operations.... Furthermore, Dagestan has an especially large share of youth with passion and energy.”³⁸

Other Areas of the North Caucasus

The influence of Islamic fundamentalism that embraces jihad reportedly has spread throughout the North Caucasus, leading to the formation of terrorist groups in Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabarda-Balkaria, and Karachay-Cherkessia.³⁹ According to testimony by Shvedov, 700 to 900 rebels are active in various areas of the North Caucasus, even though there are parts of Northern Caucasus where there are almost no rebels. He warns that “the most important point [is not] the number of active rebels nowadays. It’s an issue of the number of supporters among the civilian population.” Shvedov states that the civilian population has become widely radicalized and is able to quickly mobilize to join the rebels in attacks.⁴⁰

In October 2005, Chechen guerrillas were joined by dozens of members of the Yarmuk Islamic extremist group and others in attacks on government offices in Kabarda-Balkaria’s capital of Nalchik and other areas. The president of Kabarda-Balkaria, Arsen Kanokov, criticized local law enforcement officials for “not taking timely preventive measures with regard to representatives of religious organizations on the one hand, and [for treating] ordinary believers in an unjustifiably harsh manner on the other.”⁴¹ By mid-2008, however, he voiced concern that “Wahhabism” (a label attached by many officials to Islamic extremism and disfavored Islamic religious practices) was increasing among the youth and might contribute to a rise in terrorism.⁴² In February 2009, a firefight resulted in the deaths of seven alleged terrorists, and in March 2009, security forces killed four alleged terrorists. In March 2009, Prosecutor Oleg Zharikov claimed that a well-

³⁷ CEDR, November 26, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950038; March 20, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-4001.

³⁸ CEDR, March 26, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950293.

³⁹ Mairbek Vatchagaev, “The Truth about the ‘Kataib al-Khoul’ Ossetian Jamaat,” *Chechnya Weekly*, September 20, 2007.

⁴⁰ Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. *Briefing: Ingushetia, the New Hot Spot in Russia’s North Caucasus*, June 19, 2008.

⁴¹ “Kabarda-Balkaria: Leader Blames Law Enforcement Agencies for Harsh Treatment of Devout Muslims,” *Caucasus Reporting Service*, Institute of War and Peace Reporting, April 13, 2006.

⁴² CEDR, June 18, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950445.

organized Islamic extremist group that was responsible for the 2005 Nalchik attack continued to operate in Kabarda-Balkaria.⁴³

Gregory Shvedov has claimed that Islamic extremists in North Ossetia have been targeting gambling clubs (which were banned but are still operating surreptitiously), while in Karachay-Cherkessia they mostly have been targeting government-appointed religious leaders.⁴⁴ According to a March 2008 report on the work of the Karachay-Cherkessia antiterrorist commission, “criminal activity by a number of terrorist groups” had been prevented in 2007, and weapons caches had been neutralized.⁴⁵ Some observers have suggested that a suicide bombing at a bus stop in Vladikavkaz, the capital of North Ossetia, in early November 2008 might signal stepped-up terrorist activities in the region. The bombing reportedly led to 12 deaths and 45 injuries. The terrorist group Riyadus Salihiyina, created by Chechen terrorist Shamil Basayev but supposedly disbanded after he was killed in 2006, claimed responsibility.⁴⁶

Contributions to Instability

Many observers argue that economic distress is a factor in the rise of violence in the North Caucasus. In the Kabarda-Balkaria Republic, the main industry, the Tyrnyauz Mining Complex, is closed, as are many defense-related factories, and the agricultural sector is in decline. Infrastructure such as roads and airports also is in disrepair, and social services are inadequate.⁴⁷ Dagestan and Ingushetia have the most unemployment and poverty in Russia, and major income inequality has fueled violence against corrupt and wealthy officials.⁴⁸ Ingushetia’s economy suffered greatly during the Chechnya conflict, mainly from the influx of displaced persons which in effect doubled the population during intense periods of fighting in 1995 and 2000. According to Shvedov, the educational system in much of the North Caucasus is getting worse and unemployment is increasing. Shvedov warns that the lack of career prospects has contributed to growing support for “Wahhabi agendas” among the population.

Ethnic tensions are another factor contributing to violence in the North Caucasus. Besides those between Ossetians and the Ingush (mentioned above), in Kabarda-Balkaria there are tensions between the Kabardins and Balkars, although these are mitigated somewhat by their efforts to assert their rights vis-a-vis ethnic Russians (who make up 25% of the population, according to the 2002 census). In Karachay-Cherkessia, there are tensions between the Karachay and Nogai populations on one hand, and the Cherkess and Abazin populations on the other. In early 2006, the Putin administration abolished the Dagestani State Council, which represented the 14 largest ethnic groups, and whose chairman (an ethnic Dargin) served as the chief executive of the republic. The State Council had helped to mollify ethnic tensions. Putin then appointed an ethnic Avar as the president of the republic. Nonetheless, ethnic tensions have not yet led to large-scale violence in Dagestan.

⁴³ *North Caucasus Weekly*, March 20, 2009; *CEDR*, March 24, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950169.

⁴⁴ Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. *Briefing: Ingushetia, the New Hot Spot in Russia's North Caucasus*, June 19, 2008.

⁴⁵ *CEDR*, April 2, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950392.

⁴⁶ *CEDR*, November 19, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-546001.

⁴⁷ “Kabardo-Balkaria Seeks To Break Out Of Economic Stagnation,” *RFE/RL Russia Report*, February 01, 2008.

⁴⁸ *Russia's Dagestan: Conflict Causes*, p. 12; *CEDR*, November 4, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-548006.

In late May 2008, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin claimed that the main problems in Chechnya and the North Caucasus were poverty and unemployment, since the region had rejected the “foreign” influences of extreme Wahhabism. He stated that the Russian government had launched a Program of Development for Southern Russia to invest in infrastructure and social programs. While he asserted that Chechnya was becoming more peaceful, he admitted that there was instability in Dagestan and Ingushetia. He attributed most of the problems in these latter two regions to a mixture of clan grievances and economic distress.⁴⁹ Conversely, Russian analyst Andrei Smirnov has argued that in Dagestan, Islamic extremism, separatism, and anti-Russianism are the major causes of violence, rather than poverty and unemployment.⁵⁰

Russian analyst Aleksey Malashenko suggests that the North Caucasus region is undergoing “re-traditionalization,” which will result in the consolidation of Sufi⁵¹ and other traditional forms of Islam as part of the political and social fabric of the region. While Moscow and its local agents focus on combating visible elements of “Wahabbism,”⁵² the region is becoming broadly Islamic and less integrated politically and socially with the rest of Russia, Malashenko warns. He also suggests that to the extent that sitting officials and favored Islamic leaders are able to retain their control in the North Caucasus and ignore economic problems, Islamic extremist violence will continue.⁵³ Analyst Mark Kramer likewise suggests that disaffection among youth in the North Caucasus is so deep and widespread that they are prone to distrust such favored Islamic leaders and institutions and to be receptive to underground Islamic extremism.⁵⁴

Reportedly, authorities have enlisted the assistance of Sufi Imams in Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Chechnya to identify “Wahabbi” Muslims, who are then arrested, killed, or disappear. Young Muslims may be targeted as “Wahabis” if they end their prayers at the mosque too soon (Sufis

⁴⁹ *Le Monde*, May 31, 2008. According to Putin’s Blueprint for the Socioeconomic Development of the Russian Federation to 2020, “the organization of precautions against terrorism and the effective counteraction of threats of terrorism is a special problem in the Southern Economic Region [includes the North Caucasus]. This will be done primarily with the aid of special programs to prevent broad-scale socioeconomic destabilization by creating jobs, involving the active population in economic activity, and establishing the necessary conditions for the steady growth of these territories and the encouragement of the migration of the surplus population to regions experiencing a labor shortage. The realization of the potential of the economic region will secure growth indicators of 124 percent in 2010, 160-170 percent in 2015, and 210-250 percent in 2020 in relation to the 2007 gross regional product.” *CEDR*, May 6, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-313002.

⁵⁰ Andrei Smirnov, “Understanding the Motivations behind the Dagestani Rebels,” *Chechnya Weekly*, September 20, 2007.

⁵¹ According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, July 8, 2008, Sufism is a “mystical Islamic belief and practice in which Muslims seek to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God. It consists of a variety of mystical paths that are designed to ascertain the nature of man and God and to facilitate the experience of the presence of divine love and wisdom in the world.” Central concepts of Sufism were developed in the 8th-12th centuries C.E. Three denominations (or Tariqahs) of Sufism—the Naqshbandiya, Qadiriya, and Shazaliya—are prominent in the North Caucasus.

⁵² Wahabbism is a term used by some observers to identify a form of Sunni Islam dominant in Saudi Arabia and Qatar that calls for a return to fundamental or pure principles of Islam. The term is often used interchangeably with Salafism. As used in a derogatory sense by some in Russia, it can refer to any non-approved practice of Islamic faith. Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Anatomy of the Salafi Movement,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 29, 2006.

⁵³ Aleksey Malashenko, “Islam and the State in Russia,” *Russian Analytical Digest*, July 2, 2008. See also Vakhit Akayev, “Conflicts Between Traditional and Non-Traditional Islamic Trends: Reasons, Dynamics, and Ways to Overcome Them (Based on North Caucasian Documents),” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2, 2008. Unlike Malashenko, Akayev does not view the counter-Wahabbism alliance of Russia’s central authorities with the traditionalists as eventually unraveling.

⁵⁴ Mark Kramer, “Prospects for Islamic Radicalism and Violent Extremism in the North Caucasus and Central Asia,” *PONARS Eurasia Memo*, No. 28, August 2008.

pray longer), attend the mosque frequently, or attend early services at the mosque. In Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, and Adygea, where there are few Sufis and Islam does not have such deep roots as elsewhere in the North Caucasus, Muslims allegedly may be targeted as “Wahabbis” merely for attending the mosque or praying in public.⁵⁵

Analysts Emil Souleimanov and Ondrej Ditrych have urged students of events in the North Caucasus not to fail to consider the role of clans, members of which may become radicalized by zakhistki and repression by Moscow-installed authorities. According to these analysts, “in the North Caucasus, there has occurred over time a mutual intertwining of ... jihadist ideology and the mechanism of blood feud.... It is the young people in particular who ... are the ones who are physically able [to take revenge. They were] not raised in the established traditions in these regions of traditionalist Sufi Islam and is thus more susceptible to absorbing the extremist ideologies of jihad.” These analysts caution that “rather than vague ideas of global jihad, the resistance in the North Caucasus is far more driven by the ideas of North Caucasian, mountain dweller Muslim solidarity and the necessity of a joint struggle in the name of a common religion (Islam) and the liberation of holy ground from the yoke of the ‘infidels’.”⁵⁶

Implications for Russia

Then-President Putin claimed in a speech to the State Council in February 2008 that foreign elements had been responsible for the guerrilla attack on Dagestan in late 1999 that heralded the beginning of the second Chechnya conflict. According to Putin, the conflict “was a case of the undisguised incitement of separatists by outside forces wishing to weaken Russia, and perhaps even to cause its collapse.”⁵⁷ While he remained vague, a “documentary” aired on a Russian state-owned television channel in April 2008 alleged that France, Germany, Turkey, and the United States instigated and supported Chechen separatism.⁵⁸ Putin also has in recent years blamed “international criminal networks of arms and drug traffickers,” for supporting Chechen terrorists, and has been careful to assert that “terrorism must not be identified with any religion or cultural tradition,” in order to sidestep criticism from the Islamic world for his actions in the North Caucasus.⁵⁹

Ethnic prejudice by Russians against North Caucasian migrants reportedly has increased and has contributed to a rise in hate crimes. In the southern and eastern parts of the Stavropol region, several riots targeting these migrants have been reported. In late June 2008, the Congress of Peoples of the Caucasus sponsored a rally in Moscow to combat what they claimed were racist views of Caucasians propagated in the Russian press.⁶⁰ Moscow Human Rights Bureau head Alexander Brod has warned that hate crimes are likely to increase in 2009 as Russia further feels the impact of the world economic downturn. The Moscow Human Rights Bureau estimated that

⁵⁵ Andrei Smirnov, “The Kremlin Intensifies Reprisals against Muslims in the North Caucasus,” *Chechnya Weekly*, October 4, 2007.

⁵⁶ Emil Souleimanov and Ondrej Ditrych, “The Internationalization of the Russian–Chechen Conflict: Myths and Reality,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, September 2008, pp. 1199 – 1222.

⁵⁷ CEDR, February 8, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950541.

⁵⁸ “Documentary Alleges West Sought Chechen Secession,” *RFE/RL Russia Report*, April 23, 2008.

⁵⁹ Jacques Lévesque, “Russia and the Muslim World: The Chechnya Factor and Beyond,” *Russian Analytical Digest*, July 2, 2008.

⁶⁰ BBC Monitoring, June 23, 2008.

about 300 xenophobic attacks occurred in Russia in 2008, leaving 122 people dead and about 380 injured. Some hate crimes in Moscow and elsewhere against North Caucasians have been linked to military and police veterans of the Chechnya conflict.⁶¹

If Russia reduces its security forces in Chechnya, terrorist incidents might become (even) more frequent, some observers warn. Other factors, such as the effects of the global economic downturn, could facilitate (more) terrorism in other areas of the North Caucasus and beyond, including in the Volga River area of Russia, where other large Muslim communities reside.⁶² Kadyrov's harsh methods of combating terrorism and dissent in Chechnya may have been somewhat effective. Forces under his control have not eradicated terrorism, however, and the harsh methods have contributed to vendettas. Kadyrov's reportedly widespread human rights violations have received the acquiescence, if not support, of central authorities, and his methods have been used to certain degrees by other leaders in the North Caucasus. As a recent sign of such support, Vladimir Vasilyev, head of the Duma Security Committee, stated during a late March 2009 visit to Chechnya that the region "could be an example to other regions of how terrorism should be countered. The experience and positive practice employed here in the fight against terrorism are of great interest, particularly against the background of the unstable situation that remains tense in some regions of the North Caucasus."⁶³

Some observers warn that Russia's encouragement and support for individuals from the North Caucasus to travel to Abkhazia and South Ossetia to fight against Georgia in 2008 may have future unfavorable repercussions in Russia. These individuals might have gained sentiments that Caucasian guerrillas can defeat government forces. Personnel from Chechnya's Vostok (East) Battalion served in South Ossetia, and "the Adygea and Cherkess formed groups of fighters and, alongside Chechens, participated in removing the Abkhaz government-in-exile from the Kodori gorge. They also temporarily patrolled Georgian villages in the Gali region of Abkhazia." Among other repercussions, surreptitious arms transfers from Georgia through South and North Ossetia to other North Caucasian areas could increase.⁶⁴ On the other hand, a perhaps favorable repercussion—from Russia's viewpoint—might be the easing of population pressures in North Ossetia if some residents move to South Ossetia, where there is more arable land.⁶⁵

International Response

The United States and several other countries and international organizations have maintained that while Russia has the right to protect its citizenry from terrorist attacks, it should not use "disproportionate" methods that violate the human rights of innocent bystanders. They have objected to Russia's 2006 counter-terrorism law, which permits police and other security forces to declare a "counter-terrorism operations regime" in a locality and to detain suspects for up to 30 days, search homes, ban public assemblies, and restrict media activities without any pre-approval

⁶¹ *Interfax*, March 10, 2009; *CEDR*, March 11, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-25004.

⁶² Neil J. Melvin, *Building Stability in the North Caucasus: Ways Forward for Russia and the European Union*, SIPRI Policy Paper No. 16, May 2007.

⁶³ *CEDR*, March 26, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-21002.

⁶⁴ C W Blandy, *Provocation, Deception, Entrapment: The Russo-Georgian Five Day War*, Defense Academy of the United Kingdom, March 2009; Stacy Closson, "The North Caucasus after the Georgia-Russia Conflict," *Russian Analytical Digest*, December 4, 2008.

⁶⁵ Provocation, Deception, Entrapment.

by the courts or legislative oversight. As a result of this and other permissive laws and government actions, HRW has argued that Russia's security forces "believe they may act with impunity when carrying out any operation related to counterterrorism."⁶⁶

The European Court of Human Rights of the Council of Europe (COE) has ruled in dozens of cases brought by Chechens that the Russian government used indiscriminate force that resulted in civilian casualties and failed to properly investigate and prosecute Russian personnel involved. Hundreds of cases remain to be adjudicated. According to Russian human rights advocate and jurist Karinna Moskalenko, the Russian government has paid damages awarded by the Court to the plaintiffs, but has not taken the verdicts into account by reforming the justice system.⁶⁷ In many cases, the plaintiffs have been attacked and even killed by unknown assailants in Chechnya and elsewhere before their cases are adjudicated.

In June 2008, the Parliamentary Assembly of the COE appointed Dick Marty a rapporteur on the North Caucasus to prepare a special report on the human rights situation in the region.⁶⁸ The findings are to be incorporated into a report on Russia prepared by the Committee on the Honoring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the COE (Monitoring Committee), which is planned for debate by PACE in late 2009.

Implications for U.S. Interests

The former Bush Administration appeared to increasingly stress the threat of terrorism in Chechnya and the North Caucasus, although there continued to be criticism of Russian government human rights abuses in the region.⁶⁹ Russian analyst Igor Obdayev has stated that U.S. worldwide anti-terrorism efforts were instrumental in reducing terrorist financing in the North Caucasus.⁷⁰ In keeping with such an Administration stress, the State Department in April 2008 reported that "the majority of terrorist attacks [in Russia during 2007] continued to occur in

⁶⁶ HRW. 'As If They Fell From the Sky': Counterinsurgency, Rights Violations, and Rampant Impunity in Ingushetia, June 2008, p. 5. The counter-terrorism operations regime appears often to be used by the security forces to justify human rights abuses. "Memorial Says Will Complain to Prosecutors, Court about Activists' Detention in Chechnya," *Interfax*, June 19, 2008. See also Human Rights Center "Memorial" and Center "Demos." *Counterterrorism Operations by the Russian Federation in the Northern Caucasus throughout 1999-2006*, submitted to the Eminent Jurists Panel on Terrorism, Counterterrorism and Human Rights, International Commission of Jurists, January 2007.

⁶⁷ Karinna Moskalenko, "Civil and Human Rights and the Judicial System in Today's Russia: A Legal Practitioner's View," Carnegie Endowment, September 28, 2007.

⁶⁸ For Marty's call for a report on the North Caucasus, see PACE, Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, *Legal Remedies For Human Rights Violations In The North Caucasus: Supplementary Introductory Memorandum*, AS/Jur (2008) 21, April 11, 2008. He states that "it would appear that the human rights situation [in the North Caucasus] is by far the most alarming in the whole of the geographical area covered by the Council of Europe."

⁶⁹ The White House. Office of the Press Secretary. *President Commemorates Veterans Day, Discusses War on Terror*, November 11, 2005. President Bush stated that some "militants are found in regional groups, often associated with al Qaeda—paramilitary insurgencies and separatist movements in places like Somalia, the Philippines, Pakistan, Chechnya, Kashmir and Algeria." The last Bush Administration report on its efforts to advance human rights stated that "senior U.S. officials expressed concern to government leaders about the conduct of Russian security services and the government of the Chechen Republic, which was linked to abductions and disappearances of civilians. In meetings with federal and local officials during a visit to the North Caucasus in December [2006], the ambassador conveyed US concerns and expressed US willingness to assist in ways that promote respect for the rule of law." U.S. Department of State. *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2006*, April 5, 2007.

⁷⁰ Olga Shlyakhtina, "Igor Obdayev on the Origins And Meaning Of North Caucasian Terrorism," at www.kavkazforum.ru.

the North Caucasus, where the pacification of much of Chechnya has correlated with an increase in terrorism in Dagestan and Ingushetia.... There was evidence of a foreign terrorist presence in the North Caucasus with international financial and ideological ties.”⁷¹ Similarly, in June 2008 at the 16th session of the U.S.-Russia Working Group on Counter-terrorism, the two sides mentioned that they had cooperated on a case involving financial support for terrorist activity in Chechnya.”⁷² In a “get acquainted” meeting on April 1, 2009, Presidents Obama and Medvedev pledged to cooperate in countering terrorism, although the North Caucasus was not publicly singled out. In the first few days of the Obama Administration, the State Department issued its annual human rights report for 2008, which contained (as in 2007) lengthy descriptions of human rights abuses in the North Caucasus.⁷³

The Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY2008 (P.L. 110-161) includes \$8 million for humanitarian, conflict mitigation, human rights, civil society, and relief and recovery assistance for Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan, and North Ossetia (see **Table 1**). The Act also repeats language used for several years that directs that 60% of the assistance allocated to Russia will be withheld (excluding medical, human trafficking, and Comprehensive Threat Reduction aid) until the President certifies that Russia is facilitating full access to Chechnya for international NGOs providing humanitarian relief to displaced persons.

The Administration’s budget request for FY2009 called for \$3.5 million for conflict mitigation and reconciliation activities in the North Caucasus, “so as to help stem the spread of violence and instability.” The request also called for unspecified amounts of assistance for the North Caucasus to promote economic opportunities, youth employment, health, sanitation, and community development, and to discourage “the spread of extremist ideologies.”⁷⁴ Omnibus Appropriations for FY2009 (P.L. 111-8), signed into law on March 11, 2009, appeared to indicate considerable Congressional concern by providing \$9 million to continue humanitarian, conflict mitigation, human rights, civil society and relief and recovery assistance programs in the North Caucasus. It also repeats language used for several years that directs that 60% of the assistance allocated to Russia will be withheld (excluding medical, human trafficking, and Comprehensive Threat Reduction aid) until the President certifies that Russia is facilitating full access to Chechnya for international non-governmental organizations providing humanitarian relief to displaced persons.

In Congressional testimony on February 25, 2009, Russian human rights advocate Andrey Illarionov urged that Obama Administration efforts to “reset” relations with Russia should not mean soft-pedaling Moscow’s democratization and human rights abuses.⁷⁵ According to the Obama Administration, some human rights issues were discussed during President Obama’s April 1, 2009, meeting with President Medvedev.

⁷¹ U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Terrorism 2007*, April 2008. The Report stated that it was “often difficult to characterize whether [violence in Ingushetia and Dagestan was] the result of terrorism, political violence, or criminal activities” (p. 87).

⁷² U.S. Department of State. The United States-Russia Working Group on Counter-terrorism: Joint Press Statement and Fact Sheet, June 20, 2008.

⁷³ U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008*, February 25, 2009.

⁷⁴ U.S. Department of State. *Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations FY2009*, February 29, 2008.

⁷⁵ U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on Foreign Affairs. Hearing on from Competition To Collaboration: Strengthening The U.S.-Russia Relationship. *Statement of Andrey Illarionov, Senior Fellow, Cato Institute*, February 25, 2009.

According to some international NGOs and the State Department, all foreign NGOs face constraints by the authorities on their access and operations in Chechnya. While almost all NGOs operating in Chechnya have offices there with local staff, most continue to retain their main or at least branch offices outside the region. However, if the security situation continues to improve in Chechnya and deteriorate in Ingushetia and elsewhere in the North Caucasus, NGOs may consider moving more operations to Chechnya. Access to Chechnya by international staff is strictly controlled by the regional branch of the Federal Security Service (FSB), according to reports, and NGOs must provide detailed monthly information on activities and travel to the FSB and other authorities. At times, the local authorities have limited or refused access, although reportedly the FSB has been more cooperative in recent months. Local authorities in Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Dagestan closely oversee the finances and programs of foreign NGOs. In addition, the Russian Migration Service and other federal offices require financial and program information. Chechen officials repeatedly have turned down requests by UNHCR to open an office in Grozny to monitor whether returnees are ensured international standards of safety and dignity.

Table 1. U.S. Assistance to Russia's North Caucasus Region, FY2007 and FY2008
(U.S. dollars)

| Program Area | Activity | Implementer | FY2007 | FY2008 |
|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Conflict Mitigation & Reconciliation | Socio-Economic Recovery | IRC | 929,211 | 2,200,000 |
| | Poverty Reduction | World Vision | 565,000 | 200,000 |
| | Improved Community Infrastructure | CFNO | 100,000 | 500,000 |
| | Youth Exchange & Development | IREX | 1,050,000 | 1,300,000 |
| | TBD & Prog. Support | — | — | 748,000 |
| Rule of Law & Human Rights | Judicial Reform | Chemonics | 30,000 | — |
| | Human Rights | Faith, Hope, Love | 100,000 | — |
| | Human Rights | Perspektiva | 15,000 | — |
| | Tolerance Regional Councils | Bay Area Council | 75,000 | — |
| Good Governance | Local Governance | IUE | 250,000 | 400,000 |
| | Public Finance & Budgeting | CFP | 235,000 | 230,000 |
| | Policy Advocacy | CIPE | — | 30,000 |
| Political Competition | Election Monitoring | Golos | 20,000 | — |
| Civic Participation | Sustainable Community Development | FSD | 400,000 | 400,000 |
| | Community Connections | World Learning | 50,000 | 400,000 |
| | Civil Society Development In Southern Russia | SRRCC | 350,000 | 400,000 |
| | Civic Education | JAR | 15,000 | — |
| | Key Stone Program in the Region | Key Stone | 340,000 | — |
| | Civil Society Support Program | IREX | 70,000 | — |

| Program Area | Activity | Implementer | FY2007 | FY2008 |
|----------------------|--|--------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | Program Support | | | 122,000 |
| Health | TB Control | IFRC | 300,000 | 300,000 |
| Social Services | Psycho-Social Support for Children in the NC | UNICEF | 200,000 | |
| | Program Support | | | 15,000 |
| Economic Opportunity | Microfinance Support | RMC | 332,000 | 500,000 |
| | Rural Credit Coops and Agric. Business Development | ACDI/VOCA | 1,167,000 | 1,100,000 |
| | Economic Opportunity/Program Support | | | 60,000 |
| Total | | | 6,653,211 | 8,845,000 |

Source: U.S. Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Assistance to Europe and Eurasia.

Key:

ACDI/VOCA—Agricultural Cooperative Development International and Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance
CFNO—Children's Fund of North Ossetia
CFP—Center for Fiscal Policy
CIPE—Center for International Private Enterprise
FSD—Foundation for Sustainable Development
IFRC—International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent
IRC—International Red Cross
IREX—International Research and Exchanges Board
IUE—Institute for Urban Economics
JAR—Junior Achievement Russia
RMC—Russian Microfinance Center
SRRC—Southern Regional Resource Center

Author Contact Information

Jim Nichol
Specialist in Russian and Eurasian Affairs
jnjichol@crs.loc.gov, 7-2289